

# Chest compressions save lives, says cardiologist

February 11 2015, by Ellen Goldbaum

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Imagine being with someone who suddenly collapses and doesn't respond to you.

Of course, immediately call for help. But while waiting for help to arrive, it's still possible to assist the person who has collapsed.

"You can still provide critical assistance, even if you've had no training in cardio- pulmonary resuscitation, or CPR," says Anne B. Curtis, MD, Charles and Mary Bauer Professor and Chair of the Department of Medicine in the University at Buffalo School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. One of the world's leading clinical cardiac electrophysiologists —experts in [cardiac arrhythmias](#)—she sees patients at UBMD Internal Medicine, where she is also president and [chief executive officer](#).

"If the victim is unresponsive, it's fair to assume that they have no pulse and to begin [chest compressions](#)," she says. "Chest compressions are the most important thing you can do when someone is in [cardiac arrest](#)."

Curtis demonstrates in the video. "Lock your two hands together, and, aiming for the bottom half of the patient's breastbone, straighten your elbows and start pressing down on the chest. You want to press down about two inches and you want to do it at a rate of about 100 times a minute," she says.

She also has advice on using an automated external defibrillator (AED)

if one is available.

"If someone doesn't know how to use an AED, I wouldn't want them distracted trying to figure out how to use it, if that meant they weren't doing chest compressions," she says. "If an AED is available and there is more than one person on site to help, then using it makes more sense. Of course, the more people who are trained in CPR and in using an AED, the better."

Curtis played a key role in developing national treatment guidelines for treating [atrial fibrillation](#), a [heart rhythm disorder](#) that can cause fatigue, shortness of breath, exercise intolerance, and can even lead to heart failure. Her clinical research has significantly advanced knowledge of human cardiac electrophysiology and heart-rhythm abnormalities.

Provided by University at Buffalo

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